



600.11 Information Release, Sharing, and Reporting

Number Series: 600 - Corrections Division
Approved Date: May 28, 2018
Review Due Date: May 28, 2019

Sheriff's Approval: Digital
Review Frequency: Annually

600.11-1 Policy

- I. Requests for information from the news media will be responded to only in accordance with the *Hendry County Sheriff's Office Standard Operating Procedure Manual*,
- II. Requests from federal, state and local legislators and executives for information regarding operations or specific inmates shall be responded to promptly by Jail staff at the direction of the Jail Administrator, or designee with due regard to privacy protection statutes.
- III. A public information program shall exist which will address requests for information regarding the Corrections Division programs, services, operations and policies in a timely and accurate manner.
- IV. The Hendry County Sheriff's Office is committed to informing the public and the news media of events within the HCSO Corrections Divisions area of responsibility, and shall address emergency and non-emergency responses to the media, via the Hendry County Sheriff's Office Public Information Officer, to include the following:
 - A. Identification of areas in the facility that is accessible to media representatives.
 - B. Contact person for routine requests for information.
 - C. Identification of data and information protected by federal or state privacy laws, or federal and state freedom of information laws.
 - D. Special events coverage.
 - E. News release policy. **(Also See Section 600.12)**
 - F. Designation of individuals or positions within the facility authorized to speak with the media on behalf of the facility.
- V. In accordance with Florida law, release of inmate information does not require inmate consent with the exception of medical information which is confidential.
- VI. Consultants and contract personnel who work with inmates shall be informed in writing about HCSO policies on confidentiality of information and shall agree in writing to abide by them.

600.11-2 Responding to News Media Requests

- I. Public information, such as arrest information, shall be released as promptly as circumstances allow in an impartial, courteous and objective manner by facility staff who know the facts and what information may be disclosed. Individuals who do not know the

- facts or what information may be provided, shall assist by referring inquiries to the Shift Supervisor, or other competent authority, as appropriate.
- II. Investigative information release shall be only as stated in the *HCSO SOP Manual*.
 - III. Requests for general information regarding newly arrested persons should be referred to the Shift Supervisor. Information that may be released regarding arrested persons is listed in the *HCSO SOP Manual*.
 - IV. Requests for information regarding facility incidents shall be referred to the HCSO Public Information Officer, or the Jail Administrator or designee. Information regarding incidents that have taken place in a Correctional facility **may** be released by authorized persons unless otherwise restricted herein includes:
 - A. The nature of the incident such as fire, accident, homicide, suicide, rape, robbery, or assault.
 - B. Location, date and time of incident.
 - C. Injuries and/or damages sustained.
 - D. Name(s) of persons charged with criminal activity regarding the incident.
 - V. Inquiries' pertaining to the Corrections Division in regards to programs, services, operations, policies, and procedures, will be referred to the Jail Administrator or designee.
 - VI. Information regarding special events involving the Corrections Division shall be released only by the HCSO Public Information Officer, Jail Administrator, or designee.
 - VII. Information released to the news media, other than that taken directly from an arrest report, shall be reported to the HCSO Public Information Officer.

600.11-3 Public Requests for Information

- I. Requests for Sheriff's Office records will be responded to readily in accordance with the *HCSO SOP Manual*.
- II. Requests for information concerning programs and specific information requests received from law enforcement agencies and federal, state and local legislative and executive bodies shall be directed to the Jail Administrator for approval.
 - A. The Jail Administrator shall assign the task of gathering the requested information to appropriate staff.
 - B. It may be necessary to forward requests for information to the HCSO Legal Advisor for response.
 - C. All responses will be made promptly and fully and routed through the chain of command.
 - D. Care will be taken to ensure that responses do not violate federal, state or local statutes or laws relating to the rights of privacy.

600.11-4 Release of Inmate Information

- I. In accordance with Florida law, release of inmate custody information to outside agencies or the public does not require inmate consent.
- II. Access to inmate custody files within HCSO Jail, however, is restricted to authorized HCSO members and contract services personnel with a need to know.
- III. Inmate medical information is confidential and will not be released without the approval of the Jail Administrator.

- IV. Inmate consent for medical information transmitted to physicians, medical facilities, or other designated individuals or organizations will be documented on a medical information release form and placed in the inmate's medical file.
- V. Inmate consent is not required when medical information is requested by means of a court order.
- VI. Subpoena requests or public record requests for medical records require notarized approval from the inmate, which shall be maintained on file in the inmate medical record.

600.11-5 Arrest Information That May not be Released

Arrest information that is classified by law or judicial decision as "confidential" shall not be released. Information release is subject to the provisions of Chapter 119, *Florida Statutes*, as stated in *HCSO SOP Manual*.

600.11-6 News Media Request for Viewing Arrest Reports

- I. Requests for arrest reports intentionally omitted from public inspection shall be referred to the Records Supervisor. Such arrest reports include:
 - A. Chapter 985, *Florida Statutes*: Juveniles
 - B. Chapter 794, *Florida Statutes*: Sexual Battery
 - C. Chapter 800, *Florida Statutes*: Lewd, lascivious, or indecent assault upon or in the presence of a child
 - D. Chapter 827, *Florida Statutes*: Child abuse
- II. No member of HCSO shall release public records of any nature without strict adherence to procedures outlined in directives contained in the *HCSO SOP Manual*.

600.11-7 Consultants, Contract Personnel, and Community Volunteers

- I. Consultants, contract personnel, and community volunteers who work with inmates shall be informed in writing about HCSO policies on confidentiality of information and shall agree in writing to abide by them.
- II. Consultants, contract personnel, and volunteers shall not communicate information contained in inmate medical records to others, inside or outside the facility.
- III. Information that may be communicated to others outside the facility will be as outlined in this directive and as stated in *HCSO SOP Manual*.
- IV. An agreement regarding the confidentiality of information shall be completed and a copy given to the consultant and/or contract personnel whenever activities with inmates, or entry into the jail facility is authorized. The original shall be filed with associated documentation pertaining to the contract or consultant personnel involved.

REFERENCES

State/Federal Regulations:

Florida Model Jail Standards
Ch. 119, Fla. Stat.
Ch. 985, Fla. Stat.
Ch. 794, Fla. Stat.

Ch. 800, Fla. Stat.
Ch. 827, Fla. Stat.

FCAC:
N/A

PREA:
N/A

Forms:
N/A

Other Policy/ Procedure References:
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600.12 News Media Access to Jail Facilities
HCSO SOP Manual
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